

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5568
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
USNMR SHAPE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 02651

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, AWACS, OCON, MILI, GW
SUBJECT: NATO AEW -- FRG POSITION

BEGIN SUMMARY: I SAW MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEBER ON
FEB. 11 IN ORDER TO GET HIS APPRECIATION OF HOW BEST TO
EXPEDITE A DECISION ON NATO AEW. LEBER OBVIOUSLY DOES
NOT TAKE UK MOD MULLEY'S MARCH DEADLINE VERY SERIOUSLY
AND CONTINUED TO EMPHASIZE THE FRG'S NEED FOR TIME
BEFORE MAKING A FINAL DECISION. LEBER PROMISED TO
ANSWER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BROWN'S LETTER "IN A SHORT
TIME." HE STATED THAT HIS REPLY WOULD RAISE VARIOUS
QUESTIONS TO WHICH ANSWERS WERE REQUIRED, BUT CLEARLY
INDICATED THAT THE FRG FELT NO REPEAT NO NEED FOR
ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL BRIEFINGS. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEBER RECEIVED ME ON FEBRUARY
11 FOLLOWING MY REQUEST FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO DISCUSS
THE NATO PHM (SEE SEPTTEL) AND THE NATO AEW. MOST OF OUR
CONVERSATION WAS DEVOTED TO THE NATO AWACS. THE MINISTER
EMPHASIZED REPEATEDLY THAT THE FRG NEEDED ADDITIONAL
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TIME BEFORE MAKING A DECISION TO PROCURE THE SYSTEM. IN
THIS CONNECTION, HE NOTED THAT THE U.S. HAD BEEN SEIZED
BY THE ISSUE MANY YEARS AGO; INDEED, AMERICAN AWACS AIR-
CRAFT WERE PRESENTLY FLYING IN THE U.S. THE UK HAD HAD
EXPERIENCE WITH A SIMILAR SYSTEM AND SO IT TOO HAD HAD A
LONG TIME TO WEIGH THE PRO'S AND CON'S. HOWEVER, THE
FRG WAS A RELATIVE LATE-COMER TO THE FIELD AND IT WAS

THEREFORE NATURAL THAT IT NEEDED MORE TIME TO REACH A DECISION.

2. MINISTER LEBER EMPHASIZED THAT HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT THAT AWACS WAS AN IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT AND FOR THAT REASON THE FRG HAD NOT REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM. HOWEVER, A NATO AEW MUST BE A NATO PROJECT, NOT A BILATERAL OR TRILATERAL ONE.

3. IN REVIEWING THE FRG'S POSITION, MINISTER LEBER NOTED THAT THE NATO AEW PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE INsofar AS MARITIME SURVEILLANCE AND AIR DEFENSE WERE CONCERNED. IT HAD LITTLE UTILITY IN WARDING OFF A GROUND ATTACK. SINCE THE FEDERAL ARMED FORCES WERE BASICALLY A GROUND ARMY, IT WAS NATURAL THAT THE FRG WOULD HAVE LESS INTEREST IN THE SYSTEM THAN COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE UK WHICH WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH AWACS' MARITIME ROLE. THIS CONSIDERATION ALSO LED THE FRG TO THE BELIEF THAT ITS FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRAM SHOULD REFLECT THE FACT THAT IT HAD A SMALLER NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE SYSTEM THAN DID MANY OF ITS NATO ALLIES.

4. CONTINUING WITH HIS DISCUSSION OF THE COST-SHARING ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM, MINISTER LEBER SAID THAT A UK CONTRIBUTION AMOUNTING TO 19 PERCENT OF THE PROGRAM, AN FRG CONTRIBUTION OF 27 PERCENT, AND A U.S. CONTRIBUTION OF 29 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL DID NOT REFLECT THE RELATIVE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THESE THREE NATIONS IN A NATO AEW PROGRAM. FOR THAT REASON, THE SHARING FORMULA

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MUST BE RECONSIDERED.

5. THE MINISTER EXPRESSED GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THAT FRANCE WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM. IN HIS OPINION, FRENCH NATIONAL INTERESTS IN A NATO AEW WERE IN FACT GREATER THAN THOSE OF THE FRG. IN LIKE VEIN, THE NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, NORWAY AND DENMARK WERE ALL RELATIVELY RICH COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE A STRONG INTEREST IN THE MARITIME SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITIES OF THE SYSTEM. FOR THAT REASON, HE FELT THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THESE COUNTRIES SHOULD BE GREATER THAN PRESENTLY PLANNED.

6. I RAISED THE QUESTION OF THE UK TIME CONSTRAINTS. MINISTER LEBER STATED THAT HE WOULD BE SEEING UK MOD MULLEY TOMORROW (BOTH MULLEY AND LEBER WILL BE ATTENDING THE INTERNATIONAL WEHRKUNDE MEETING IN MUNICH FEB. 12 AND 13). HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE DOMESTIC PRESSURES WHICH MULLEY FACED. AT THE SAME TIME, MINISTER LEBER SEEMED TO DISMISS THESE PRESSURES AS

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MANAGEABLE: "THE WORLD WILL NOT COME TO AN END IF THERE
IS NO DECISION ON A NATO AEW BY THE END OF MARCH."

7. I NOTED THAT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BROWN WAS LOOKING
FORWARD TO THE MINISTER'S ANSWER TO HIS LETTER CONCERNING
THE NATO AEW. LEBER SAID THAT HE WOULD BE ANSWERING
SOON. HE STATED THAT HIS REPLY WOULD RAISE SEVERAL
QUESTIONS TO WHICH ANSWERS WERE REQUIRED. I ASKED IF
THESE WERE TECHNICAL QUESTIONS FOR WHICH A U.S. BRIEFING
TEAM MIGHT BE HELPFUL. MINISTER LEBER SAID THAT THEY
WERE NOT OF THIS NATURE AND THAT FURTHER BRIEFINGS WERE
NOT REPEAT NOT DESIRED. HE SAID THAT THE FRG HAD ALL
THE TECHNICAL INFORMATION IT REQUIRED FROM NATO AND
ELSEWHERE. HE REPEATED THAT VIEW WHEN I RAISED THE
POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT BY A U.S. BRIEFING TEAM IN A
SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT CONTEXT LATER IN OUR CONVERSATION.

8. IN DEVELOPING FURTHER THE THESIS THAT THE FRG
REQUIRED MORE TIME TO REACH A DECISION, MINISTER LEBER
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EMPHASIZED HIS NEED FOR A FULLY DEVELOPED PROPOSAL TO TAKE TO THE GOVERNMENT AND TO PARLIAMENT. HE SAID THAT HE MUST BE SURE THAT HIS PROPOSAL WOULD NOT BE TURNED DOWN. HE ALSO NOTED THAT HE COULD NOT GO TO PARLIAMENT WITH A PROPOSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN A NATO AWACS TOO EARLY. FOR INSTANCE, IT COULD NOT BE PUT IN THE CONTEXT OF PARTICIPATING IN AWACS INSTEAD OF BUYING TANKS. IN SHORT, AWACS EXPENDITURES MUST FIT IN WITH THE REST OF THE FMOD'S PROCUREMENT PROGRAM.

9. IN CLOSING OUR DISCUSSION, MINISTER LEBER MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BROWN. THIS IS THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE CABLE.

10. COMMENT: (1) MINISTER LEBER HAD PREVIOUSLY WARNED ME THAT U.S. PRESSURE RISKED BECOMING COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. MY OWN DISCUSSION WITH HIM WAS EXTREMELY LOW-KEY. I FEEL THAT ANY FURTHER U.S. ATTEMPT AT THIS TIME TO PRESSURE THE FRG TO MAKE AN EARLY DECISION WOULD BE RESENTED AND WOULD NOT ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE. (2) IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WOULD SEEM TO BE UP TO UK MOD MULLEY TO CONVINCE MINISTER LEBER THAT THE UK TIME CONSTRAINTS ARE REAL. PRESUMABLY, MULLEY WILL ATTEMPT TO DO SO DURING THEIR FEB. 12 MEETING IN MUNICH.

11. AFTER MY CONVERSATION WITH THE MINISTER I WAS ADVISED OF MR. LEGERE'S CALL TO MY POLITICAL COUNSELOR TELLING US OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S REPORTED INTEREST IN HAVING SOME AWACS AIRCRAFT COME HERE FOR DEMONSTRATION FLIGHTS. LEBER EITHER DID NOT KNOW OF THIS SUGGESTION OR ELSE CHOSE DELIBERATELY TO IGNORE IT. WE ARE NOT ABLE TO ANALYZE THE CONTRADICTION YET, UNLESS SCHMIDT WAS ALSO TRYING TO BUY TIME, BUT WE WILL ATTEMPT TO LEARN MORE FROM THE CHANCELLERY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. IN THE MEANTIME, GIVEN LEBER'S STRONG ASSERTION THAT WE

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SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT PUSH ANY BRIEFINGS AT THIS TIME, AND GIVEN OUR BASIC BELIEF THAT LEBER IS PERSONALLY NOT UNSYMPATHETIC TO THE AWACS PROGRAM, I WOULD NOT RECOMMEND BRINGING DEMONSTRATION AIRCRAFT TO GERMANY UNTIL WE ARE ABLE TO SORT THIS OUT.

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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